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LETTER DATED 17 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made on 17 December 1998 by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris N. Yeltsin, in connection with the situation concerning Iraq (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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Annex

Statement by the President of the Russian Federation

On the morning of 17 December 1998, the United States of America and the United Kingdom launched missile and bomb strikes on installations in Iraq. The attacks have claimed human lives and caused serious material damage.

Such a turn of events, which the Russian Federation has resolutely opposed, gives rise to the most serious concern and a feeling of indignation and profound alarm. The resolutions adopted by the Security Council do not give any grounds for such action. By carrying out an unprovoked act of force, the United States and the United Kingdom have committed a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the generally accepted principles of international law and the norms and rules for the responsible conduct of States in international affairs. The strike was made just when the Security Council was discussing the question of Iraq.

In point of fact, such action undermines the entire system of international security, the central link of which is the United Nations and the Security Council. The Russian Federation has consistently made intensive efforts to ensure the speedy settlement of the problem of Iraq. We remain convinced that the possibilities for a political and diplomatic solution of the Iraqi crisis are far from exhausted. This has been borne out by the fact that Iraq has, on the whole, cooperated regularly with the United Nations in recent months.

The fact that the countries that carried out this act of force did not consider it possible to continue to seek a solution through political means arouses indignation. The military strikes have seriously damaged the arduous work of recent years to achieve a post-crisis settlement of the situation in the Persian Gulf and to dismantle Iraq's capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery.

The Russian Federation demands an immediate cessation of the military acts of force and calls for restraint and prudence in order to prevent a further escalation of the conflict, which is fraught with serious consequences not only for an Iraqi settlement but also for stability in the region as a whole. The problem of Iraq can be solved only through political and diplomatic means on the basis of compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions and international law.